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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Time-Out Parent Inventory (TOPI) is to provide an objective and quantitative assessment of a parent's self-reported use of time-out procedures to manage a child's behavior. The TOPI is intended to be a tool for researchers as well as professionals who help parents and children. The professional asks the parent a series of 12 questions that provide an assessment of the parent's skill in following the time-out procedures described in "SOS! Help for Parents" (Clark, 1985). Content validity and interrater reliability have been demonstrated in studies involving 20 parents. Advice is given about TOPI administration and scoring and how to give feedback to parents. The inventory is attached. Three figures illustrate the discussion. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

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TOPI Manual

TIME-OUT PARENT INVENTORY
FOR CLINICAL AND RESEARCH APPLICATIONS

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Lynn Clark, Ph.D.
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"Time-out doesn't work with my child!" This statement is often heard from parents seeking professional assistance for managing their child's behavior. Most of these frustrated parents, however, are using time-out procedures incorrectly. The purpose of the Time-Out Parent Inventory (TOPI) is to provide an objective and quantitative assessment of a parent's self-reported use of time-out procedures.

The TOPI is intended to be a useful tool for researchers as well as for professionals who help parents and children. The TOPI is administered by a professional asking a parent a series of 12 questions in a brief, structured interview. The professional records and scores the parent's oral responses to each question. The resulting TOPI score obtained by a parent reflects the degree of similarity between that parent's self-reported use of time-out and the time-out program described in the handbook for professionals and parents, *SOS! Help For Parents* (Clark, 1985). The TOPI is for use with parents whose children are two to twelve.

Implementing time-out effectively is an essential skill which helps parents to decrease or eliminate many behavior problems. However, it is important to emphasize that when time-out is used, parents should always integrate the use of time-out with other parenting methods such as positive reinforcement, active ignoring, logical and natural consequences, etc. Many parenting skills are important in helping a child and time-out is only one of these skills.

ED 380 478

The 12 items comprising the Time-Out Parent Inventory provide an assessment of a parent's skill in following the time-out procedures and program described in *SOS! Help For Parents* (Clark, 1985). The time-out procedures and program in *SOS*, in turn are heavily based on the clinical research and writing of Gerald Patterson, Rex Forehand, and other behavioral researchers who have studied ways parents can help children with behavior problems (Schroeder, Gordon, & McConnell, 1987; Clark, 1986). Patterson's work (1982) has focused on older children with more severe behavior problems such as conduct disorder *(DSM-III-R)*. Forehand and colleagues (Forehand & McMahon, 1981; Roberts, 1982) have concentrated on helping parents with younger children, three-to-eight years of age, who are noncompliant and who may display oppositional defiant disorder *(DSM-III-R)*.

Development And Psychometric Properties Of The TOPI

It was decided to develop an inventory to assess parents' time-out skills which could be used with both literate and illiterate parents. Consequently, a format was developed by which an interviewer would read inventory items, record parent responses, and also score those responses.

Content Validity

The author of *SOS* and four researchers (Chandler, Frey, Roth, & Roth, 1987) worked closely together to assure content validity by developing TOPI items that reflected the essential steps and important aspects of the *SOS* program of time-out. Drafts of TOPI items were developed after carefully examining the time-out program described in *SOS*, especially the nine basic steps for using time-out (pp. 31-39, 55-89) and the nine common mistakes parents often make with time-out (pp. 91-94).

Initial drafts of TOPI questions were written. Then, two-point, one-point, and zero-point scoring criteria and sample responses were written for each inventory question. Next, the four researchers each administered these draft TOPI items to parents who said that they used some form of time-out procedures with their children. Responses from the parents were recorded and scored by the researchers. Gradually, inventory questions, scoring criteria, and sample responses were revised and refined in order to increase

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clarity of items, ease of recording and scoring, scoring agreement among researchers, and adherence to the *SOS* method of time-out. The following is a listing of the final 12 TOPI items. The items are all stated in the standard "Is Format", the format on which all research and field trials have been done.

Standard TOPI Inventory Items: "Is Format"

1. When your child does something good, that pleases you, what do you do?
2. For what problem behaviors do you use time-out?
3. Where is time-out at your home?
4. Give me an example of what you say when getting your child to time-out.
5. How long does it take to get your child to time-out when he willingly goes? How many seconds or minutes?
6. How long is time-out for your child?
7. What do you say or do while your child is in time-out?
8. Tell me how your child gets released from time-out.
9. What do you do or say to your child after time-out is over?
10. How did you explain or tell your child about time-out?
11. Where is the timer when your child is in time-out?
12. How often do you threaten to use time-out and not follow through with it?

For each TOPI item, a counterpart experimental "Should Be Format" item was constructed. Currently, no research has been completed on the modified "Should Be Format" items. The potential clinical value of administering the TOPI in the alternate "Should Be Format" is described later in this manual. The difference between items in the "Is Format" and the "Should Be Format" will be evident upon comparing the items in each format.

Experimental TOPI Inventory Items: "Should Be Format"

1. When your child does something good, that pleases you, what should you do?
2. For what problem behaviors should you use time-out?
3. Where should be time-out at your home?
4. Give me an example of what you should say when getting your child to time-out.
5. How long should it take to get your child to time-out when he willingly goes? How many seconds or minutes?
6. How long should be time-out for your child?
7. What should you say or do while your child is in time-out?
8. Tell me how your child should get released from time-out.
9. What should you do or say to your child after time-out is over?
10. How should you explain or tell your child about time-out?
11. Where should be the timer when your child is in time-out?
12. How often should you threaten to use time-out and not follow through with it?

Interrater Agreement/Reliability

After the 12 inventory items, scoring criteria, and sample responses were developed, a study was conducted by four researchers to assess interrater agreement for scoring parent responses to the TOPI (Chandler, et. al., 1987). Each of the four researchers used the structured interview format to administer the TOPI to five parents who acknowledged that they used some form of time-out. All interviews were recorded on audio tape. The TOPI was thus administered to a total of 20 parents. Then each of the four researchers independently listened to each of the 20 taped administrations of the TOPI and scored each administration.

Two different approaches were used to analyze the data from the 20 TOPI administrations for determining interrater agreement/reliability. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficients were calculated to determine how consistently each rater rated all subjects when compared to each other rater. Table 1 presents all pairwise Product-Moment Correlation coefficients and the average correlation across

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Contributors to the development of the TOPI include Carole Clark, Ken Graham, William Pfohl, Doris Redfield, and Harry Robe.

rater pairs, based on Fisher's Z transformations yielding an average r of .93, significant at less than the .001 level. Using data obtained from the 20 subjects, calculations were made of percent agreement between the four raters for scoring individual TOPI items. Percent agreement for each item was determined by dividing the number of cases all four raters agreed upon (i.e., all assigning an exact score of two, one, or zero points) by the total number of cases (n=20). Table 2 presents the percent of agreement between the four raters for each of the individual TOPI items.

Table 1
TOPI Total Score Interrater Reliability

Rater pairs	Pearson r	Fisher's Z
1 and 2	.93	1.66
1 and 3	.96	1.96
1 and 4	.93	1.66
2 and 3	.91	1.53
2 and 4	.94	1.74
3 and 4	.91	1.53
Mean:	.93*	1.68

*Significant at less than the .001 level.

Table 2
Interrater Agreement for Scoring Individual TOPI Items

TOPI item	Percent of agreement between all four raters
1	90 %
2	70 %
3	60 %
4	45 %
5	60 %
6	45 %
7	85 %
8	75 %
9	30 %
10	65 %
11	85 %
12	75 %

Test-Retest Reliability

A single researcher administered the TOPI to 23 parents (both fathers and mothers) who acknowledged that they used some form of time-out with their child. The subjects were recruited from diverse sources and included parents of children in day-care, parents of children in Head Start, members of a church, and parents who worked at a university as faculty or office staff. The children ranged in age from three to eleven years of age. Approximately 21 days following the first administration, the 23 parents were readministered the TOPI. Four of these readministrations were done by telephone. When readministering the inventory the examiner did not have access to the parents' initial scores. The initial total TOPI scores obtained by the 23 subjects were correlated with the subsequent retest scores obtained by the same 23 subjects. Using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, a coefficient of .89 was obtained which is significant at less than the .001 level. The standard error of measurement for total TOPI scores is 1.73 points. The mean for the initial TOPI scores was 13.74 (SD of 3.80) and the mean for the subsequent retest TOPI scores was 13.44 (SD of 3.46). The scores changed very little as a result of the readministration of the inventory.

Administration And Scoring

Use the term "inventory" or "questionnaire" rather than "test" when introducing the TOPI in order to reduce the threat many parents may experience. Select either the "Is Format" or the "Should Be Format" for the entire administration of the inventory. The "Is Format" assesses the parent's self-reported, customary use of time-out and is more frequently used. The "Should Be Format" assesses the parent's understanding and knowledge of correct time-out procedures. Each format of the TOPI usually can be administered and scored in about 10 minutes.

Record the parent's response to each inventory item in the space provided. Assign a score of two points, one point, or zero points for each of the twelve TOPI items. Scoring criteria and sample responses are provided for the items. It is frequently necessary to further question a parent's responses in order to accurately score those responses. If a parent is inconsistent in his application of time-out procedures, such as using a portable timer at times but not at other times, ask "What do you usually do?", or "What do you do most often?" Score the parent's usual or most recent implementation of time-out. Freely question vague responses. Sometimes after questioning parent responses, those responses are still difficult to

score. In general, assign one point to those responses which are inferior to scoring criteria provided for two-point responses but superior to scoring criteria provided for zero-point responses. Frequently use the child's name to keep the parent focused on the identified child rather than on the child's siblings. While administering the TOPI, don't teach the parent correct time-out procedures. Save such instructions until after the inventory has been administered.

Interpretation And Clinical Uses

The interpretive statements presented below and in the section "Parent Counseling" are based on the clinical experience of the writer and colleagues. A parent's TOPI score provides both professional and parent with an objective assessment of that parent's self-reported time-out skills. Total TOPI scores can vary from zero to 24 points as illustrated by Figure 1 which is reproduced from the TOPI Record Form. A low TOPI score, arbitrarily defined as 10 points or less, probably indicates that a parent has inadequate, ineffective time-out skills. A high TOPI score, arbitrarily defined as 18 points or more, probably indicates that a parent has adequate, effective time-out skills.

Parent's Obtained TOPI Score (Circle number of points)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

SOS Inconsistent
Not Time-Out

SOS Consistent
SOS Time-Out

Figure 1. Record of a parent's total TOPI score as shown on the TOPI Record Form.

Parents respond in different ways to counseling and training in the application of time-out procedures. The hypothetical, descriptive model presented in Figure 2 is based on the clinical experience of the writer and colleagues. This figure illustrates several common types of parent responses to time-out counseling and training. The following further describes types of parent responses to counseling and training in the implementation of time-out procedures.

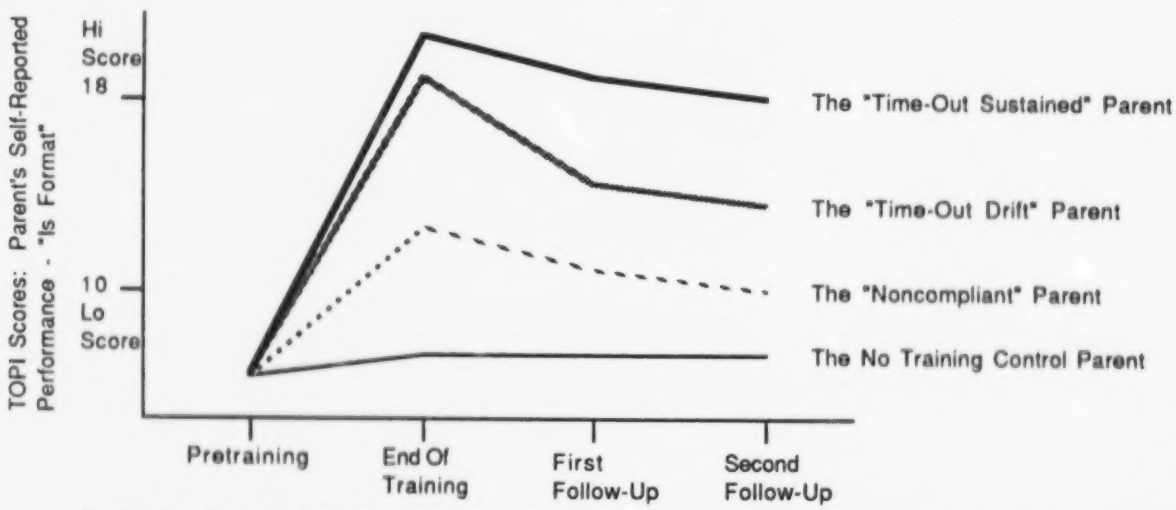

Figure 2. A hypothetical, descriptive model of common types of parent responses to time-out parent counseling and training.

The "Time-Out Sustained" Parent. This parent applies time-out procedures correctly by the end of parent counseling and training. In latter follow-up assessments there is very little deterioration in her use of time-out procedures as reflected by her TOPI scores.

The "Time-Out Drift" Parent. He uses time-out procedures correctly by the end of parent counseling

and training. However, later follow-up assessments indicate deterioration in his use of time-out and *drift* toward lower TOPI scores.

The "Noncompliant" Parent. She has learned and knows correct time-out procedures but does not practice them. Operationally defined, this parent's knowledge of correct time-out procedures, as assessed by the "Should Be Format" of the TOPI, is six or more points higher than her self-reported, customary use of time-out, as assessed by the "Is Format" of the TOPI. A noncompliant parent is ineffective in using time-out to improve the behavior of an oppositional, noncompliant child. Figure 3 illustrates the noncompliant parent's response to counseling and training in time-out procedures.

The "Eager To Use Time-Out" Parent. This parent overuses time-out procedures, applies time-out procedures before he knows when and how to correctly apply them, and underuses positive reinforcement and other methods for managing children. The counterpart "eager to use time-out" student-clinician relies too heavily on time-out procedures when advising and counseling parents.

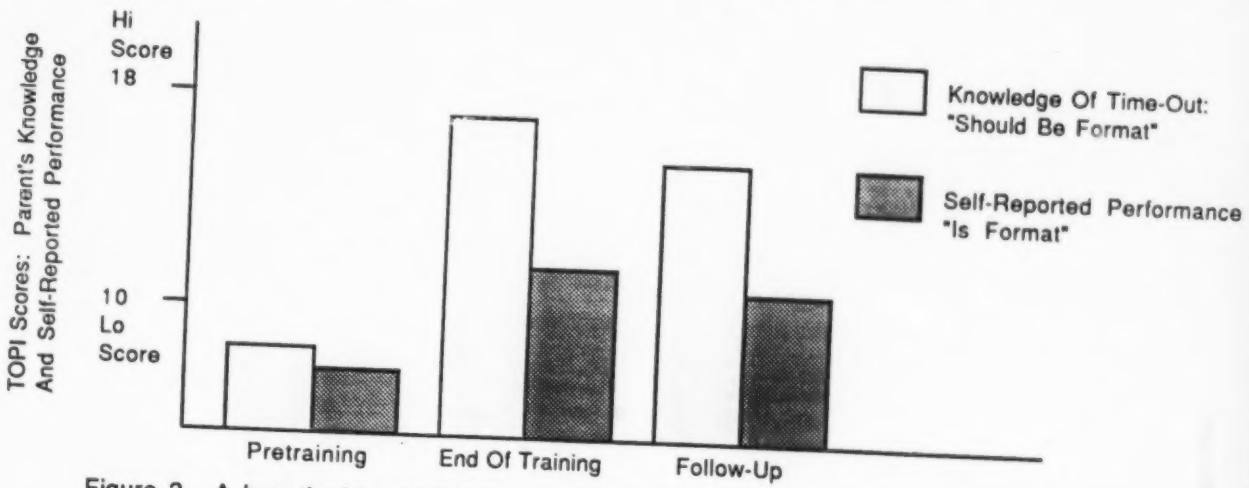

Figure 3. A hypothetical, descriptive model of the noncompliant parent's response to time-out parent counseling and training.

Parent Counseling*

Most parents are threatened by an assessment of their parenting skills, so be supportive when introducing and administering the TOPI and giving feedback to parents. Following administration and scoring, consider showing the parent his score as recorded on the first page of the TOPI Record Form and as reproduced in Figure 1.

What about parents who score below 18 on the "Should Be Format" or the "Is Format" of the TOPI? Discourage them from beginning or continuing to use time-out until they can learn to practice adequate time-out procedures, especially if they are attempting to manage a difficult, hard-to-handle child. State that time-out is not expected to be very effective in changing a child's behavior when the parent's score drops much below 18. Also, mention that a child is more likely to rebel against time-out (e.g., making nois in time-out, refusing to go to time-out, escaping from time-out) when a parent's TOPI score is 15 or below Say that a parent's time-out skills normally need to be at 18 or higher for time-out to be effective and to lessen possible *time-out power struggles* between parent and child. Consider mentioning, *"If a parent want to change his child's behavior, he must first change his own behavior"* (i.e., refine his own time-out skills and other parenting skills).

For a parent who is already employing time-out, ask that she describe in detail her own use of time-out on several previous occasions and her child's compliance or noncompliance with those time-out procedures Review "Common *Mistakes* Parents Make With Time-Out" in Chapter 12 of *SOS* (pp. 91-94) and determine which of the nine mistakes the parent is making. Most parents will be making three or more of the nine common time-out mistakes.

SOS! Help For Professionals, a kit for parent counseling and training, is available from Parents Press.

Help parents identify and reduce their time-out mistakes and improve all of their parenting skills by providing parent education, parent counseling, or parent training. In addition to teaching a variety of other child management skills, *SOS* describes 33 target behaviors on which time-out can be used (Chapter 4), the nine basic steps for using time-out (Chapter 6), nine common time-out mistakes parents make (Chapter 12), nine ways children rebel against time-out (Appendix B), and ways parents can manage each type of behavior rebellious to time-out (also in Appendix B). Two parenting books by Gerald Patterson, *Living With Children* (1976) and *Families* (1975), also describe time-out procedures and other child management skills which are rather consistent with *SOS* parenting skills and methods.

Research Uses And Questions

When time-out procedures are used as a treatment/intervention variable in research studies, the TOPI provides an objective measure of this variable. Inventories, rating scales, and behavioral checklists have become popular for assessing child behavior problems since they are easy to administer and score. Two frequently used inventories include the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) (Abidin, 1986) and the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (Eyberg, 1980). The PSI is completed by parents whose children are ten and below and yields Child Subscale scores, Parent Subscale scores, and a Life Stress score. The Eyberg is completed by a parent who rates 36 child behaviors in terms of frequency of the behavior (a seven point scale) and whether or not that behavior is a problem for the parent. More complex behavioral coding systems for assessing child and parent behavior are also important research tools (Polster & Dangel, 1984; Forehand & McMahon, 1981). However, these coding systems require specialized training for administration and scoring.

The following are TOPI related research questions. It is important to re-emphasize that time-out skills are only one component of a complete parent training and counseling program.

TOPI Research Questions

1. Time-out is relatively effective in improving selected child behavior problems when parents' time-out skills are high (TOPI scores of 18 and above). Time-out is relatively ineffective in improving these behavior problems when parents' time-out skills are low (TOPI scores of 12 and below).
2. Children are more likely to demonstrate the nine behaviors which are rebellious to time-out when parents' time-out skills are below 15 points.
3. The more noncompliant a child is, the more well-developed the parent's time-out skills (as assessed by the TOPI) need to be in order to improve the child's behavior.
4. Acquiring well developed time-out skills (TOPI scores of 18 and above) will improve the self-concept (as assessed by selected PSI scales) of parents with hard to handle children.
5. Noncompliant parents (i.e., "Should Be Format" TOPI scores six or more points higher than "Is Format" TOPI scores) living with noncompliant children will continue living with noncompliant children!

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Individuals doing research involving the TOPI are encouraged to send copies of manuscripts and articles to Lynn Clark, Psychology Department, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101. Before reproducing copies of the TOPI, refer to page one.

TOPI RECORD FORM

TIME-OUT PARENT INVENTORY

FOR CLINICAL AND RESEARCH APPLICATIONS

Lynn Clark, Ph.D.

Parent's Name: _____ Child's Name: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____ Child's Age: _____ Birthdate: _____

Date Of Inventory: _____ Child's Sex: M F (Circle One)

Format Of Administration: "Is Format" or "Should Be Format"
(Circle One) *(How is time-out used?)* *(How should time-out be used?)*

The TOPI assesses a parent's skill in using time-out with his or her child. Administer 12 items to a parent in a structured interview, record his or her responses, and assign a maximum score of two points to each item. Select either the "Is Format" or the "Should Be Format" for the entire administration of the inventory. Use the "Is Format" to assess the parent's customary use of time-out. Select the "Should Be Format" to assess the parent's knowledge of correct time-out procedures.

Some parents report being inconsistent in using a portable timer and in the application of other time-out procedures. Ask these parents, "What do you usually do?" Score the parent's usual implementation of time-out procedures. Freely question vague or sparse responses but don't teach correct time-out procedures while administering the TOPI. Refer to the TOPI Manual for information regarding administration, scoring, interpretation, clinical uses, psychometric properties, and research uses.

Possible Score: 24 Obtained Score: ___ Percent Of Possible Points: ___

Parent's Obtained TOPI Score (Circle number of points)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

SOS Inconsistent
Not Time-Out

SOS Consistent
SOS Time-Out

Inventory Item **Score**

1. **When your child does something good, that pleases you, what do** (should) **you do?** ____

2 POINTS-- Frequently reward the child with social rewards such as attention or praise. *Smile...Give her a hug...Tell him "good job".*

1 POINT--- Response not clearly 2 or 0 points.

0 POINTS-- Usually ignore the good behavior; says that children shouldn't be rewarded and given praise for good behavior. *Tell her she could have done a better job...I don't say anything.*

Notes: _____

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2. **For what problem behaviors do** (should) **you use time-out?** ____

2 POINTS-- Persistent misbehaviors which are impulsive, aggressive, emotional, or hostile; Category A Behaviors listed in SOS.
Hitting...Temper tantrums...Teasing...Back talk...Swearing.

1 POINT--- Response not clearly 2 or 0 points.

0 POINTS-- To get child to do a complex task; Category B Behaviors listed in SOS.
Failing to do homework...Pouting...Bad mood...Overactive behavior...Fearfulness.

Notes: _____

3. **Where is** (should be) **time-out at your home?** (Children four or five may be scored on criteria for either 2-4 year old group or 5-12 year old group, whichever group yields the highest score.) ____

The Two- To Four-Year Old

2 POINTS -- Large straight back chair or a specific spot on the floor and within sight or hearing of parent (for safety's sake).

1 POINT --- Small child's chair or child's bench; must face a particular direction; separate room for time-out (but not child's bedroom) and out of sight or hearing of parent.

0 POINTS -- Child's bedroom, bed, crib, playpen, easy chair, sofa, rocking chair.

The Five- To Twelve-Year Old

2 POINTS -- Bathroom, utility room, hallway free of people, parent's bedroom.

1 POINT --- Den, living room, dining room, foyer, sunporch, pantry.

0 POINTS -- Child's bedroom, interesting or non-boring place, scary or dangerous place, in view of television, near other people.

Notes: _____

4. **Give me an example of what you say** (should say) **when getting your child to time-out.** ____

2 POINTS-- Clear statement in 15 words or less that tells what child did and an order to go to time-out.
Time-out for hitting!..You talked back, go to time-out!..For swearing, go to time-out!

1 POINT--- Response not clearly 2 or 0 points.

0 POINTS-- A response that indicates parent uses more than 30 words, is vague, doesn't give a clear command to go to time-out.
If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times. Don't grab the cat by his tail. Do you want to go to time-out?

Notes: _____

5. **How long does** (should) **it take to get your child to time-out when he willingly goes? How many seconds or minutes?** ____

2 POINTS-- Usually, within 10 seconds after the bad behavior occurs. Estimate the amount of time based on the parent's response.
1 POINT--- About 11 to 30 seconds after the bad behavior occurs.

0 POINTS-- More than 30 seconds after the bad behavior occurs.
Quite a while, I usually scold her first...After she apologizes and promises not to do it again...Time-out is upstairs. It takes a while to get there.

Notes: _____

6. **How long is** (should be) **time-out for your child?** ____

2 POINTS-- One minute for each year of child's age.
1 POINT--- Amount of time is consistent for each time-out, but not adjusted for the child's age.
0 POINTS-- Amount of time depends on how angry the parent is; however long the child feels like staying in time-out; any amount of time greater than 3 minutes for each year of the child's age.

Notes: _____

7. **What do** (should) **you say or do <u>while</u> your child is in time-out?** ____

2 POINTS-- Parent completely ignores child during time-out.
1 POINT--- Parent gives the child some non-verbal attention, such as eye contact during time-out.

0 POINTS-- Parent makes some comment or talks to the child during time-out.
I ask her if she is thinking about the bad thing that she did...We argue a lot during his time-outs.

Notes: _____

8. **Tell me how your child gets** (should get) **released from time-out.** ____

2 POINTS-- Answer indicating the use of a <u>portable timer</u> which <u>signals the child</u> (e.g., by a sound) when time-out is over. *She knows when the timer goes off.*
1 POINT--- Child can easily <u>hear a nonportable timer</u> (e.g., microwave or kitchen wave timer). Some timing device is used but it signals <u>only the parent</u> when time-out is over. *She hears the microwave timer and then leaves time-out. I use the kitchen range timer and I tell him when it rings.*

0 POINTS-- No timing device is used or timing device doesn't <u>signal</u> either the parent or child when time-out is over. *When I get tired of hearing him cry...When she apologizes...Sue watches the wall clock...I keep track of the time on my wrist watch.*

Notes: _____

9. **What do (should) you do or say to your child after time-out is over?** ____

2 POINTS-- Usually, the parent says nothing about the bad behavior or asks what the child did that caused him to be placed in time-out. Parent rarely uses an additional punishment after time-out is over.

1 POINT--- Response not clearly 2 or 0 points.

0 POINTS-- Following time-out parent usually gives a lengthy scolding, spanks, or makes the child promise to be good in the future.

Notes: _____

10. **How did (should) you explain or tell your child about time-out?** ____

2 POINTS-- Three of the following four criteria are met:
a) Both parents (or only one parent if there is only one parent in home) have calmly explained or demonstrated time-out.
b) Child is told she is loved or parents care for her or parents want to help her.
c) Child is told that a particular problem behavior(s) will cause her to be placed in time-out.
d) Child is told a specific name for the time-out procedure such as "time-out" or "quiet time".

1 POINT--- Only two of above criteria are met.
0 POINTS-- One or none of the above criteria are met.

Notes: _____

11. **Where is (should be) the timer when your child is in time-out?** ____

2 POINTS-- Portable timer is placed out of reach but within hearing or vision of child.
On the floor outside the bathroom...About five feet from the time-out chair.

1 POINT--- Response not clearly 2 or 0 points.

0 POINTS-- Portable timer is not used or child holds the timer during time-out.
I use my watch...She holds the timer. It calms her down...She watches the wall clock.

Notes: _____

12. **How often do (should) you threaten to use time-out and not follow through with it?** ____

2 POINTS-- Parent rarely gives more than one warning (or threat) before placing the child in time-out. Parent uses behavior penalty (i.e., response cost) or another mild punishment if child refuses to go to time-out.

1 POINT--- Response not clearly 2 or 0 points.

0 POINTS-- Parent frequently gives more than one warning before placing child in time-out.

Notes: _____